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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship of parental consistency, both between parents and in each parent separately, with respect to socialization attitudes and their longitudinal impact on the developing personality of children. A total of 83 sets of parents completed the Child-Rearing Practices Report (CRPR) when their children were 3 years of age. Forty-five girls and 38 boys were assessed at the ages of 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 on the California Child Q-Sort (CCQ). When the children were 12 years of age, the parents of 18 girls and 22 boys were re-examined on the CRPR. Objective and broad-ranging measures of mother/father agreement in childrearing values (CRPR) and child personality (CCQ) at the various age levels yielded relationships between parents' consistency and the psychological characteristics of their children. Parental agreement or consistency had a much greater impact on boys' developing personality than it did on girls'. The differences were consistent and detailed over time for both sexes. Results were interpreted in terms of boys' need for structure and girls' need for less inhibition. In comparison with intraparental consistency, interparental consistency had a greater impact on the child's personality. Individual consistency in both parents had its largest influence at adolescence; this finding was interpreted as reflecting an adolescent need for structure in the child/adult period of transition. (Author/BJD)

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Parental Consistency in Child-rearing Orientation and Personality Development

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Abstract

The impact of the quality and nature of parental socialization attitudes on the personality development of the child was examined at 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 years. Objective and broad ranging measures of mother-father agreement in child-rearing values (CRPR) and child personality (CCQ) at the several age levels yielded relationships between parental consistency and the psychological characteristics of their children. Parental agreement or consistency has a much greater impact on boys' developing personality in childhood than is the case for girls. The differences are remarkably consistent and detailed over time for both sexes. The sons of highly consistent parents are evaluated as well adjusted, intellectually oriented, stable in relationships with a measure of docility and conformance. The daughters of highly consistent parents are less sex-typed and stereotypical in their attitudes, behaviors, and are less inhibited, empathic and compliant. Though the boys continue in adolescence as bright, adaptable, and controlled, the negative picture of the young girl culminates in an adolescent who is cheerful, adaptable, outgoing, and assertive. Intra-parent consistency on child-rearing attitudes over time (3 & 12 years) indicates that mother consistency is most influential for boys, father consistency is most influential for girls. Results are interpreted in terms of greater need for structure in

boys, less inhibition for girls. Individual consistency in both parents has greatest influence at adolescence, interpreted as an adolescent need for structure in the child-adult period of transition. Finally, role clarity in highly agreed-parents diminishes, leading to less sex-typed behavior on the part of children of both sexes.

Parental Consistency in Child-rearing Orientations and Personality Development

Problem

The quality and nature of parent socialization attitudes and their long term impact on the developing personality of the child has been a theoretical concern for decades. Limiting advance of knowledge has been a preoccupation with the exceptional, e.g., aggressiveness, emotional disturbances (Nye, 1957; Patterson, 1975) and children of non-intact families (Hetherington, Cox, & Cox, 1976; Lynn & Sawrey, 1959; Santrock, 1975) without establishing a normative context for parental attitudes and consequent influence on the child. Additionally, we have not had broadly ranging and psychometrically sound measures of parent attitudes (Becker, 1964; J. H. Block, 1965). And finally, there have been few systematic studies over time of the implications of child-rearing orientation for later personality development.

The present study investigates the relationship of parental consistency between and within parents in socialization attitudes and their longitudinal impact on the developing personality of children assessed at ages 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 years.

Procedure

From a large array of data on parents and their children (interviews, naturalistic assessment devices, observations, experimental procedures) in the Block and Block longitudinal investigation of ego control and ego resiliency (1980), the present study selected as its focus a measure of parent socialization attitudes (J. H. Block, 1965).

The sample was comprised of 83 sets of parents who completed the CRPR when their children were three years of age, and 45 girls and 38 boys followed over the subsequent age periods (3, 4, 7, 11, 14 years) who were assessed by the California Child Q-sort (CCQ). When the children were 12 years of age, 40 sets of parents who had completed the CRPR earlier retook the device (parents of 18 girls and 22 boys).

The CRPR (Child-rearing Practices Report) consists of a Q-sort of 91 socialization-relevant items to be rated on a 7 point scale independently by each parent when the child was 3 and 12 years. Correlating the independently-expressed child-rearing orientation of the mother and father yielded an index of inter-parental parental agreement and a measure of intraparental agreement or consistency.

The CCQ (California Child Q-set) was employed to describe the child's personality. Such ratings were obtained from their nur-

sery school teachers at ages 3 and 4, and by their public school teachers at 7 and 11 using the CCQ (Block & Block, 1980). The CCQ consists of 100 representative statements about the psychological characteristics of children. The raters were multiple (3 nursery school teachers for each child independently completed the CCQ; at age 7, the public school teacher plus two psychologists who independently interviewed and rated each child). For an extended description, see Block, Block, and Morrison (1981).

The parental agreement (consistency) score was correlated with each item of the CCQ for boys and girls separately at ages 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 years. Similarly, each parents score on the CRPR at 3 and 12 years was correlated for himself/herself to provide a measure of intraparent consistency. Again, each of these scores were separately correlated with the CCQ items over the several age periods.

Results

Table 1 presents the results of correlating the parent agreement scores obtained when the child was 3 years of age with boys and girls separately over the age periods.

Insert Table 1 about here

In brief, the results indicate that parental consistency in so-

cialization attitudes has a more profound impact on young boys than young girls. The impact is greatest at 3 years of age (56% of correlations significant for boys; 6% of correlations significant for girls). The percentage decreases as a function of age but it remains substantial, though the differential sex impact does not obtain at later stages.

Tables 2 and 3 present the personologic content of the correlates of parental agreement in socialization attitudes for boys and girls.

Insert Table 2 about here

Insert Table 3 about here

The results suggest that three year old boys from an environment of parental agreement are well adjusted, helpful, cooperative, have nigh standards, not jealous or envious, responsible, rational, and empathic, though one should note some indications of docility and conformance. Only a few correlates obtained for girls, the trend suggesting less than sex-typed behaviors on the part of girls with consistent parents.

At 4 and 7 years, the earlier description of boys continues with little alteration, while girls of consistent parents are

characterized as less empathic, immature, less inhibited, emotional, less compliant, not shy or reserved, more self-assertive.

At 11, boys of highly consistent parents are described as competent, skillful, planful, possessing high standards, while girls are more open, not inhibited, like to compete, cheerful and not distrustful. At 14 years, the boys are characterized as controlled, reasonable, adaptable, and possessed of high standards. On the other hand, notwithstanding the prior negative qualities seen in girls with highly consistent parents, the young adolescent girl is now described as perceptive, creative, uninnibited, and candid.

Table 4 presents the results of intraparental consistency over time §Fa(3&12) and Mo(3Mo(3&12)† and the personality ratings over the several ages for the children.

Insert Table 4 about here

It is immediately apparent that intraparental consistency has less discernible impact on the developing child's personality than interparental agreement or consistency. The impact suggest substantial influence on the boy and somewnat less on the girl. Further analysis of these qualities by mother and father consistency by sex of child in Tables 5 and 5a and 6 and 6a suggest that mother consistency has far greater impact on boys, fatner consistency far

greater impact on girls.

Insert Table 5&5a about here

Insert Table 6&6a about here

With boys, mother impact is associated with benign, socially desirable qualities (creative, responsible, humorous, high intellectual capacity), while father impact on boys is associated with less desirable qualities (passive, lacking in confidence, looks to adults for help, eager to please, not independent). Again, father impact on daughters is reflected in such qualities as less caution, less anxiety, self-assuredness, autonomy, vitality, outgoingness, and self-reliance.

Conclusions

The outcomes crystallize the important impact of parental agreement on children, with far more impact on males at early ages.

It is possible that parental consistency has the meta effect of providing less clear and less stereotyped sex role models for boys. This may prove to be problematic. For girls, it may well be salutary, as there appears to be less conformance and stereo-

typical sex role responses when parental agreement obtains. That is to say, parental agreement would appear to be more important and inhibiting for boys and act as a releasing agent for girls.

The question raised by these results bears directly on the complexities in development. If parental agreement yields a highly civilized young boy, what price his future adjustment to his peers where rough and tumble, acting-out behavior is normal and valued? Again, such agreement yields a difficult, immature, and resistant young girl up to preadolescence -- the outcome, somewhat unpredictably, being a prototype of modern woman: independent, self-assured, confident, self-reliant, adjusted, competent. If these results have real generality, such notions call into question many aspects of socialization and theories regarding personality development in the young.

One cannot help but conjecture that a high degree of parental agreement may represent a consensus that obscures sex role delineation. As a result, children of both sexes show opposite-sex as well as like-sex characteristics. Additionally, the significant number of correlates associated with the opposite-sex parent's consistency is understandable in light of theses suggested by Freud (1933) and Talcott Parsons (1964).

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Table 1

Parental Agreement Index at Age 3 of the Child and Personality Correlates of the Child at Ages 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 Years: By Sex of Child

Ages	3	4	7	11**	14**
Girls	6*	30	27	46	38
(N)	(45)	(44)	(36)	(36)	(38)
Boys	56	32	23	16	35
(N)	(38)	(41)	(35)	(37)	(37)

* Number indicates percent of total CCQ items yielding a coefficient of ±.25 or higher with the CRPR3 and CCQ items at each age level.

** The CCQ at 3, 4, and 7 years has 100 items. At 11 and 14 years there are 63 items.

Table 2

CCQ Correlates of Parental Agreement Index at Age 3: Males

Item		3 (38)	4 (41)	7 (35)	11 (37)	14 (37)
68	Has high intellectual capacity	.56	.53	.59	.44	.48
67	Is planful, thinks ahead	.53	.40	.46	.52	.35
25	Uses and responds to reason	.52	.63	.15	.30	.43
96	Creative in perception, work	.50	.34	.61	.12	.31
66	Attentive & able to concentrate	.48	.41	.33	.34	.32
99	Reflective, thinks & deliberates	.51	.53	.31	.17	.37
69	Verbally fluent	.36	.28	.41	.31	.33
17	Behaves in a sex-typed manner	-.48	.03	-.58	-.26	-.26
47	High standards of performance	.41	.20	.36	.32	.48
38	Has unusual thought processes	.40	.10	.44		
74	Strongly involved in what he does	.50	.33	.27	.13	.36
81	Admits unpleasant, neg. feels.	.32	.48	-.12		
55	Afraid of being deprived	-.42	-.32	-.17		
41	Persistent; d.n. give up easily	.44	.17	.37	.23	.23
48	Seeks reassur. re self worth	-.34	-.40	-.16	-.33	-.27
65	Unable to delay gratification	-.43	-.45	-.11	-.20	-.27
34	Restless and fidgety	-.54	-.35	-.19	-.09	-.04
21	Tries to be center of attention	-.45	-.29	-.11	-.20	-.24
13	Tries to stretch limits	-.42	-.31	-.07	-.27	-.12
76	Can be trusted; is dependable	.41	.32	.07		
56	Jealous & envious of others	-.38	-.22	.19		

Table 2 - cont'd.

Item		3 (38)	4 (41)	7 (35)	11 (37)	14 (37)
85	Aggressive, physically or verb	-.44	-.20	-.19	-.15	-.15
6	Helpful and cooperative	.39	.30	-.20	-.08	-.08
91	Emotional reactions inappropri	-.36	-.35	-.03		
89	Competent, skillful	.09	.19	.36	.34	.66
97	Active fantasy life	.41	.25	.06		
29	Protective of others	.33	.05	.32		
32	Tends to give, lend, share	.30	.04	-.30		
20	Tries to take advantage of othe	-.37	-.17	.09		
3	Warm and responsive	-.14	-.30	-.18	-.17	-.30
64	Calm and relaxed, easy-going	.35	.19	-.18	-.07	-.01
26	Physically active	-.39	-.33	-.30	.04	-.05
14	Eager to please	-.11	-.14	-.28	-.22	-.30
54	Rapid mood shifts; emot.labile	-.37	-.30	.01	-.06	-.14
30	Arouses liking in adults	.33	.12	-.13	-.14	-.23
52	Is physically cautious	.38	.22	.09	-.01	.04
27	Visibly deviant from peers	-.33	-.21	-.02	-.08	-.17
39	Immobilized under stress	-.34	-.27	.00	.03	-.23
46	Goes to pieces under stress	-.37	-.14	.08	.04	-.26
61	Tends to be judgmental of others	-.11	.28	.30		
77	Feels unworthy, sees self as bad	-.28	-.34	-.07		
88	Self-reliant, confident	.29	.28	.15	.14	.26
83	Seeks to be indep. and autonomous	.23	.35	.15	.08	-.04
78	Easily offended; sens. to critic.	-.08	-.24	-.27		
87	Imitates those he admires	-.16	-.29	.14		
1	Prefers nonverbal communic	-.14	-.23	-.24	-.15	.02
57	Dramatizes or exaggerates	-.25	-.18	.14		

Table 3

CCQ Correlates of Parental Agreement Index at Age 3: Females

Item		3 (45)	4 (44)	7 (36)	11 (36)	14 (38)
18	Expresses neg. feelings openly	.28	.32	.28		
58	Is emotionally expressive	.22	.39	.29	.25	.45
54	Rapid mood shifts; labile	.14	.39	.39	.16	.05
35	Inhibited and constricted	-.06	-.30	-.36	-.35	-.42
32	Tends to give, lend, share	-.24	-.36	-.19		
75	Is cheerful	-.13	-.22	.30	.38	.21
59	Neat & orderly in dress & beh.	-.19	-.36	-.31	-.16	-.20
69	Is verbally fluent	.14	.21	.35	.32	.19
15	Shows concern for moral issues	-.27	-.44	.05		
29	Is protective of others	-.29	-.39	-.08		
84	Is a talkative child	.11	.28	.35	.27	.24
82	Is self assertive	.10	.32	.31	.26	.30
95	Easily irritated; overreacts	-.06	.41	.24	-.24	.10
98	Shy & reserved; makes a slow cont.	.04	-.26	-.33	-.30	-.43
31	Empathic; recogs. other's feelings	-.23	-.34	.11		
30	Arouses liking in adults	.06	-.34	-.03	.47	.02
33	Cries easily	.08	.34	.24		
90	Is stubborn	.12	.42	.19	-.15	-.03
8	Keeps thoughts & feels. to self	.03	-.16	-.35	-.33	-.43
12	Reverts to immature beh.und.stres	.23	.37	-.04	-.21	.03
67	Planful, thinks ahead	-.19	-.28	-.31	-.07	-.03

Table 3 - cont'd.

ITEM		3 (45)	4 (44)	7 (36)	11 (36)	14 (38)
1	Prefers nonverbal communication	-.02	-.14	-.37	-.32	-.32
52	Is physically cautious	.01	-.19	-.37	-.27	-.59
2	Considerate of other children	-.17	-.36	-.09		
62	Obedient and compliant	-.11	-.33	-.17	-.21	-.37
17	Behaves in a sex-typed manner	.04	-.24	-.24	.29	-.19
88	Is self-reliant, confident	-.07	.18	.25	.31	.28
99	Reflective; deliberates before acting	-.13	-.18	-.34	-.14	-.41
44	In conflict, tends to give in	-.13	-.29	-.17		
87	Imitates those she admires	-.23	-.11	.25		
94	Is sulky or whiny	.14	.31	.02	-.31	-.24
53	Indecisive and vacillating	-.10	-.28	-.28	-.08	-.22
37	Likes to compete; test self	-.17	.05	.15	.37	.25
71	Looks to adults for help/direct.	.01	-.10	-.38	-.25	-.32
6	Helpful and cooperative	-.16	-.26	.17	.14	-.16
27	Visibly deviant from peers	-.22	.00	-.05	-.45	-.16

Table 4

The Relationship of Individual Parent Consistency on Socialization Attitudes and Child Personality at 3, 4, 7, 11, and 14 years.

Females			Males		
Age	Mother	Father	Age	Mother	Father
3 (N)	2* (17)	9 (16)	3 (N)	25 (30)	26 (20)
4 (N)	29 (28)	19 (17)	4 (N)	12 (31)	22 (22)
7 (N)	13 (29)	13 (17)	7 (N)	16 (29)	9 (20)
11 (N)	6 (31)	16 (17)	11 (N)	6 (35)	5 (24)
14 (N)	8 (31)	35 (18)	14 (N)	43 (35)	5 (24)

* Number refers to percent of correlates with parental coefficient of consistency over time

Table 5

CCQ Correlates of Individual Parent Consistency Over Time: Females

Mother Consistency

	Item	3 (27)	4 (28)	7 (29)	11 (31)	14 (31)
16	Proud of his accomplishments	-.23	-.36	-.10	.34	.17
37	Likes to compete, test self	-.28	.23	.15	.23	.24
44	When in conflict, gives in	.08	-.18	-.39		
100	Victimized and scapegoated	-.21	-.25	-.19		
38	Has unusual thought processes	.16	.20	.27		
59	Neat & orderly in dress & manner	-.15	-.49	-.10	.09	-.26
78	Easily offended, sensit. to ridic	-.19	-.09	.30		
88	Self-reliant, confident	-.14	-.01	.32	.29	.04
53	Indecisive and vacillating	.26	-.32	-.06	-.10	-.08
68	Has high intellectual capacity	-.04	.22	.32	.16	.01
46	Goes to pieces under stress	.18	.25	-.11	-.19	-.01
29	Protective of others	-.20	-.33	-.01		
52	Physically cautious	.11	-.43	-.17	-.01	-.23
14	Eager to please	.00	-.27	.31	-.13	-.16
34	Restless and fidgety	.04	.34	-.30	-.03	.04
47	Has high standards of performance	-.19	.16	.16	.19	.16
1	Prefers nonverbal communication	.01	-.32	.17	-.19	-.10

Table 5a

CCQ Correlates of Individual Parent Consistency Over Time: Females

Fatner Consistency

Item		3 (16)	4 (17)	7 (17)	11 (18)	14 (18)
92	Physically attractive, comely	.23	-.35	-.47	.28	.43
72	Readiness to feel guilty	-.65	-.13	.19		
78	Sensitive, easily offended	.20	.18	.57		
48	Seeks reassurance re self wortn	-.16	.43	.09	-.51	-.37
39	Repetitive, immob. under stress	.17	.39	.31	-.30	-.37
98	Shy and reserved	-.36	-.12	-.48	-.25	-.56
84	Talkative	.45	.13	.30	.24	.47
67	Planful, thinks ahead	-.21	-.36	-.32	-.22	.02
46	Goes to pieces under stress	-.02	.40	.25	-.38	-.16
33	Cries easily	-.13	.33	.28		
45	Withdraws under stress	-.27	-.24	-.13	-.36	-.35
66	Attentive & able to concentrate	-.06	-.46	-.33	-.15	-.21
27	Visibly deviant from her peers	-.49	.16	.08	-.26	-.11
59	Neat & orderly in dress & mann	.08	-.48	-.30	.09	-.18
7	Seeks physical contact w. others	.33	.21	.17		
44	Wnen in conflict, gives in	-.20	-.14	-.36		
58	Emotionally expressive	.36	.00	.38	.17	.52
37	Likes to compete, test self	-.13	.15	.28	.34	.19
82	Self assertive	.19	-.09	.30	.32	.56

Table 5a - cont'd.

Item		3 (16)	4 (17)	7 (17)	11 (18)	14 (18)
30	Arouses liking in adults	.20	-.23	-.25	-.20	.00
1	Prefers nonverbal communication	-.36	-.08	-.15	-.28	-.43
55	Afraid of being deprived	-.15	.34	-.14		
21	Tries to be center of attention	-.21	.05	.21	.36	.20
26	Is physically attractive	-.01	-.33	.33	.15	.27
87	Imitates those she admires	.25	.08	.27		
88	Self-reliant, confident	-.14	-.31	.12	.23	.39
25	Uses & responds to reason	.07	-.22	-.28	-.22	-.12
4	Gets along well w. oth. childr	.18	-.22	-.19		
38	Has unusual thought processes	.04	.16	.39		
94	Tends to be sulky or whiny	.45	.13	.23	.13	-.01
100	Victimized & scapegoated	-.39	.08	.11		
86	Likes to be alone, solitary	-.26	-.13	-.19		
9	Devs. genuine & close relats.	.39	.13	-.06		
76	Can be trusted, is dependable	.13	-.31	-.14		

Table 6

CCQ Correlates of Individual Parent Consistency Over Time: Males

Mother Consistency

Item		3 (30)	4 (31)	7 (27)	11 (25)	14 (24)
68	Appears to have hi intel cpacity	.48	.21	.73	.25	.58
96	Creative in work, play, and thought	.58	-.09	.56	.23	.45
33	Cries easily	.14	.22	-.51		
38	Has unusual thought processes	.65	.07	.14		
71	Looks to adults f. help & direction	.27	.26	-.32	-.26	-.10
47	High standards of performance	.43	-.19	.29	.19	.50
87	Imitates those he admires	-.28	-.38	-.14		
50	Bodily symptoms due to tension	.30	-.22	-.27		
69	Is verbally fluent	.22	.09	.51	.21	.46
97	Has an active fantasy life	.56	.14	-.06		
1	Prefers nonverbal communication	-.32	-.15	-.27	-.27	-.24
17	Behaves in a sex-typed manner	-.57	-.05	-.21	-.14	-.04
51	Is agile & well coordinated	-.42	-.27	-.17	-.10	-.01
73	Responds to humor	.62	.18	.06	.04	-.25
61	Is judgmental of others' behav	.02	-.05	.59		
14	Is eager to please	-.08	.34	-.30	-.13	-.17
29	Is protective of others	.05	-.25	-.34		
66	Is attentive & able to concentrate	.13	-.05	.41	.25	.11
74	Strongly involved in what he does	.24	.03	.31	.22	.40
88	Is self-reliant, confident	.17	-.18	.28	.16	.20
67	Is planful, thinks ahead	.20	.03	.46	.08	.26